

Application No. 09/979,569
Attorney Docket No. PG3707USW

In the Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method of loading a container with a defined quantity of product which comprises:

a) i) providing a perforated plate which has first and second sides and a perforation which has a first opening in the first side and a second opening in the second side;

ii) closing off the perforation at its second opening by locating a closing member at the second side of the perforated plate;

b) directing powder through the first opening into said closed-off perforation onto the closing member by the action of a moving first leveller blade on a sweeping path relative to the perforated plate to fill the closed-off perforation with powder; and

c) transferring the contents of the perforation to said container;

wherein in step b) the first leveller blade is non-contactingly spaced from the first side of the perforated plate and presents a forward acute angle to the sweeping path.

2. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the closing off is achievable by the use of a blanking plate.

3. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the closing off is achievable by the use of a blanking pin inserted into the perforation.

4. (Original) A method according to claim 3, wherein the blanking pin is moveable within the perforation to adjust the volume of the closed-off perforation.

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the diameter of the closed-off perforation is between 1.5 and 15 mm.

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7. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein said first leveller blade moves on a linear sweeping path.
8. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the forward acute angle is between 1 and 60°.
9. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 8, wherein the forward acute angle is between 5° and 25°.
10. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the first leveller blade presents multiple forward acute angles to the linear sweeping path.
11. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 10, wherein the first leveller blade is curved in form.
12. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 11 wherein the first leveller blade is articulated in form.
13. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the first leveller blade has a flat tail section.
14. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 7, comprising plural movements of the first leveller relative to the perforated plate.
15. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 7, wherein a thin layer of powder is left on the first side of the perforated plate after movement of the first leveller blade.
16. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 15 wherein the depth of said thin layer of powder is from 3 to 20 mm.

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17. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 16 wherein the depth of said thin layer of powder is from 4 to 8 mm.
18. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 7, wherein the powder is further directable by at least one subsequent leveller blade.
19. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 18 wherein the at least one subsequent leveller blade moves along the perforated plate at a level equal to or lower than the lower level than that of the first leveller blade.
20. (Original) A method according to claim 19 wherein the distance between the level of movement of the first leveller blade and the at least one subsequent leveller blade is 0 to 12 mm.
21. (Original) A method according to claim 20 wherein the distance between the level of movement of the first leveller blade and the at least one subsequent leveller blade is 1 to 3 mm.
22. (Currently amended) A method according to ~~any of claims 1 to 7~~ claim 1 wherein the perforated plate forms the rim of a drum.
23. (Original) A method according to claim 22 wherein the powder is directable by gravity as said drum rotates.
24. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, additionally comprising removing excess powder from said perforated plate subsequent to directing powder into the perforation.
25. (Original) A method according to claim 24, comprising removing said excess powder by the action of a wiper.

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26. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 1, wherein the contents of the perforation are transferable by the action of a transfer pin.

27. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein direction of powder into the closed-off perforation and transfer into the container is a continuous step.

28. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein transfer of the contents of the perforation to the container comprises:

- a) reopening the perforation;
- b) placing the container in registration with the perforation; and
- c) transferring the contents of the perforation into the container.

29. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 1, wherein the contents of the perforation are transferable by the action of a vacuum system.

30. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 29 wherein said vacuum system comprises a vacuum head and at least one vacuum cup.

31. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 1, additionally comprising compacting the powder in the perforation.

32. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 31 wherein the powder is compacted to a volume of between 70 and 100% of the original volume of powder in the closed-off perforation.

33. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 31, wherein the powder is compacted to form a tablet.

34. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 31, wherein the powder is compactable by the action of a compacting pin.

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35. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 26, wherein the transfer pin and the compacting pin are integral.
36. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 26, wherein the transfer pin and the compacting pin are identical.
37. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the container is a blind cavity.
38. (Original) A method according to claim 37, wherein the blind cavity is selected from the group consisting of a blister pocket, an injection moulded plastic pocket, a capsule and a bulk container.
39. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, additionally comprising applying a lid to the container to protect the contents therein.
40. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the powder comprises a medicament.
41. (Original) A method according to claim 40, wherein the medicament is selected from the group consisting of albuterol, salmeterol, fluticasone propionate and beclomethasone dipropionate and salts or solvates thereof and any mixtures thereof.
- 42 – 78. (Cancelled)
79. (Withdrawn) A tablet obtainable by the method according to claim 1.
80. (Withdrawn) Compacted powder obtainable by the method according to claim 1.

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